

## PRAYER BOOK REVISION IN THE HOUSE OF CLERGY.

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THE work of Prayer Book Revision has now advanced so far that we are provided with definite material for serious consideration. The conclusion, so far, of the deliberations of the House of Clergy and the issue of the Amendments of the Drafting Committee (Clergy IA) place before us the materials which are almost certain to come before the House of Bishops without serious alteration. It is useful to remind ourselves that the results so far reached represent the conflux of two streams of thought and doctrine. The first of these may be described as the desire for Revision proper—that is, the bringing the language, phrases, and terms used in the Book of Common Prayer up to date by modernizing its language so that it may be the better understood of the people. Rubrics, too, that deal with a state of Society passed away, and Psalms, whose language and thought are regarded generally as not entirely harmonious with the spirit of the New Covenant, clearly call for adjustment. The expansion of our religious activities, necessitating the provision of other Services additional to those already provided, clearly points to the wisdom of adding Services for special occasions, such as Harvest Festivals, so that zeal and enthusiasm may be regulated by Church authority rather than left to the undisciplined fervour of individuals or groups.

Perhaps, also, a more frequent remembrance in our Services of the Church in Paradise, provided it were guarded from abuse and tainted associations, would not have aroused serious disagreement and would be regarded as within the confines of legitimate Revision.

But all along another school of thought has contributed a very definite element, constantly emerging in proposals and debates, and now clearly discernible in the conclusions reached. This school has seen in Revision an opportunity for obtaining a footing in the Liturgy for certain doctrines which they contend are there already, implicitly at least, but which they know are so seriously denied as to lay them open to the charge even of dishonesty in making the declarations they are required to make in order to stand in the

teaching ranks of the Church and enjoy its emoluments and opportunities. One cannot but sympathize with such men, for it is hateful to a Christian, and an English Christian especially, that any should assert that there are even colourable grounds for charging him with dishonesty in making, or dereliction in keeping, his contracts. Two things ought to be borne in mind respecting this section of the Church, unfortunately allowed to assume to itself the title of Anglo-Catholic. The first is that the whole question of Revision has come before us as the result of the Letters of Business partly issued because of illegalities, excesses, and doctrinal teachings which have been carried on by the extreme wing of that section and which the Royal Commission found "must be made to cease." The attempt to defeat the conclusions of the Royal Commission by actually introducing an alternative Prayer Book, to be made permissible and therefore legitimate, which allows sufficient justification for these practices and doctrines to be continued and extended, has caused most of the difficulties (not all) in the way of unanimous and agreed Revision.

It is notorious that this section do not seek support for their views in the well-known appeal of the Church of England to Holy Scripture and the primitive Church. Their appeal is a variation of that of the Roman Catholic Church to Scripture and tradition interpreted by an infallible Pope, but it is at the base the same in kind and it leads to somewhat similar conclusions. Their appeal is to Catholic traditions or "heritage"; Ancient Liturgies; present actual "opinion" and "practice" (sometimes described as "the facts of the situation"); and the principle of mutual concessions between "opinions." It is not, therefore, cause of surprise that in the most important matter—namely the Eucharistic office—the House of Clergy were unable to argue on an alternative Canon. The House was not agreed in doctrine, because its members are not agreed in the authority to which they appeal. They do not all agree with the doctrine expressed in the present Prayer Book for the same reason, and consequently they desire an office with which their doctrines will harmonize. Since the Reformation the appeal of the Church of England, with the consent and support of her greatest scholars, has been to Holy Scripture and the primitive Church. This no longer satisfies all, and the reversion of a section of her clergy to the mediæval position for the determining

sound doctrine now marks far and away the most serious thing in the Church of England.

Before the work of Revision was entered on three questions urgently demanded decision in view of prevalent teaching in the Church : 1. What is the true doctrine of the Eucharist ? 2. What is the doctrine of the Church of England ? 3. What is the authority to decide ? These questions have been carefully avoided in the House of Clergy, but they have yet to be faced and decided at whatever cost. Agreed Revision waits on that decision. And the merits of the present Canon in the Prayer Book were never considered, nor any cause shown why on account of its defects an alternative is needed.

Before considering a few points which illustrate the doctrinal departure of the Revision by the House of Clergy from Reformation doctrine, attention may be drawn to the very serious change involved in the provision of an alternative Prayer Book at all. Hitherto, whatever criticism it might be open to, the Prayer Book was the Common, or United Manual of Public Worship in the whole Church. Parties there have been all along since the Reformation, but the Prayer Book was used by all alike. It was above party. Its wonderful balance, in the Holy Communion office, was secured by the simple sequence of its parts, and, above all, by its close adherence to Holy Scripture. Nothing in it could be shown to be inconsistent with the First Great Communion in the Upper Room. It has been, therefore, capable of the same width of interpretation by individual minds and consciences as the New Testament, *but of nothing wider or later*. Indeed, to quote Dr. Bethune-Baker, "The fine religious sense of our Reformers served them so well that they gave us an order purged of every idea and suggestion that, judged by the standards of their time, could be regarded as irrational or superstitious, yet preserving all the ancient constituents and characteristics of the rite to which its efficiency, age after age, has been due."<sup>1</sup> If this present proposal, or any alternative Communion office, is set forth by authority, Common or United Prayer will no longer prevail. The parochial system will be ended in urban areas and discordant congregationalism take its place. In country parishes there may be a few cases where both offices will be used at different hours, but

<sup>1</sup> Church of England Handbooks, No. 14 : *The Meaning of the Order for Holy Communion*.

even then Common Worship will be no more. Judging by what we see around us, wherever the Incumbent is an Anglo-Catholic no tolerance will be shown, and the laity must accept what the priest provides or go elsewhere, which in many cases will mean nowhere, or to the Dissenting Chapel—as at present in so many cases. When people move from one place to another, they may find themselves in a parish where “continuity of doctrine and practice” has worked out in such a way as to offer them forms of worship they cannot use and which alienate them from public worship. And this will apply equally all round. What a contrast, to her disadvantage, will the Church of England present to the Roman Church here, with its one doctrine and one Service of the Mass, found by a devout Romanist wherever he goes. If ever there was an uncatholic proposal it is that in the same diocese there should be differing Eucharistic offices and their use dependent on the individual preference of priests. Those who advocate such an arrangement have other ends in view than conformity to historical precedent.

It was stated by clergy of quite opposite schools during the debates that they could perceive no doctrinal differences between the Prayer Book Canon and the alternatives now proposed. One wondered why it had not occurred to them to inquire how it has come to pass that a great many, and they not the least learned, of the clergy take a quite opposite view? The earnestness with which the leaders of the A.C. section of the House demanded nothing less than the “concessions” they had obtained in the Jerusalem Chamber certainly did not support that view. If words, and the order of words, mean anything it will not be seriously denied that words and ideas not at present in the P.B. office are in the alternative Canons; that these words have doctrinal significance or suggestion, and that the whole order has been orientated in the direction of the Roman Mass. The contention of this paper is that there are serious doctrinal differences, and that those differences are bound to have a serious bearing on the declarations to be made by the clergy on entering a new sphere of ministry, or on ordination. There is no need to labour the point that if the proposed alternatives are put forth by authority, whichever of them he may select to use, every clergyman will be bound by the doctrinal content of all three—that is, by the doctrine of the P.B. and that of the two alternatives. The Anglo-Catholic will perhaps have

little difficulty, inasmuch as he will regard the P.B. office as merely defective, and his intention in making his declaration will cover all that is implied or permitted in the alternative he chooses. But others will not be able to use his method with their judgments and consciences. Convinced that the alternatives to the P.B. office allow men to hold and teach (1) the wrong anaphora, or offering to the Father of the Consecrated Bread and Wine before being partaken of ; (2) the anamnesis, or memorial before the Father, wrongly asserted to have been willed by our Lord ; (3) and the invocation of the Holy Spirit to sanctify the consecrated bread and wine before partaking, involving a doctrine nowhere found in Holy Scripture and inconsistent with the nature and office of the Holy Spirit, they will be unable, as honest men, to make their declaration. In addition to these matters they will be faced with the Roman idea of Sacrifice, which, starting with the opening form of Preparation, where twice over in anthems the use of the term " the Altar of God " cannot fail to lead the unlearned to refer it to the Holy Table (the anthem is taken directly from the ordinary of the Roman Mass), runs like a thread through the whole service, being especially seen in the threefold reference to Sacrifice in the Consecration prayers. Supplemented by ceremonial, hymns and teaching, the first of these references to sacrifice will be identified with the Sacrifice of Christ in the bread and wine—the very essence of the Roman error—as now permitted, and so authorized, doctrine in the Church of England. That will be a burden too heavy for the Church to bear.

Another feature in the alternative Canon is the way in which the growing (but unscriptural and uncatholic) practice of Hearing Mass (or Non-Communicating attendance) is facilitated. The careful distinction between the Communicants and the people in the office, combined with pulpit and other teaching, will certainly assist in increasing the " devotional " use of the elements as distinguished from their only use as instituted by Christ—that they should be consumed by the worshippers.

In this connection the second of the General Rubrics at the end of the office is to be noted. " It is much to be wished that at every celebration of the Lord's Supper the worshippers present, not being reasonably hindered, will communicate with the Priest." This rubric is taken almost *verbatim* from the decrees of the Council of

Trent (Sess. xxii. cap. vi. *De Sacrif. Missae*). “The most holy synod could wish that in every Mass the faithful assisting would communicate, not only in spiritual affection, but also by the sacramental reception of the Eucharist, etc.” “The Council had it in its power to provide an effectual remedy for the evils which had arisen from non-communicating attendance and private Masses. Nevertheless, it contented itself with a very faint expression of disapproval, and deliberately perpetuated the practice to which so many abuses, and so much error in doctrine, could trace their rise” (see Scudamore, *The Communion of the Laity*). By a similar faint and halting rubric the practice is now to be encouraged in the Church of England.<sup>1</sup> It is enough to make St. Chrysostom turn in his grave.

It is to be feared that some passages in the Revision will not enhance the reputation of the clergy with exegetical scholars. Some of the new Proper Prefaces, for instance, certainly put a great strain on intelligent thinking. For instance, those for the Feast of the Transfiguration and All Saints' Day. The former contains a most doubtful interpretation of the purpose of the Transfiguration (“that we might be transformed, etc.”), and the latter an interpretation of Hebrews xii. 1, which cannot stand. But the worst example is found in the Proper Preface for the Consecration, or Anniversary, of a Church: “Who, though Thy Glory is in all the world and Thy greatness is unbounded, dost vouchsafe to hallow for Thy Name places meet for Thy worship.” It is a confusion of thought to identify Christian Churches with the Temple. God did not hallow synagogues as He did the Temple. The Christian House of Worship is lineally descended from the synagogue—not from the Temple (Vitranga). We, not God, consecrate our Churches. The assertion of the new Preface is, moreover, in direct collision with our Lord's words to the woman of Samaria and with St. Stephen's speech (St. John iv. 20, 21, 24; Acts vii. 48, 49).

The increased attention fixed on the Virgin Mary in the Revision, and especially the introduction of her name in the Canon of the Eucharistic office is another sign, together with the introduction of days for the observance of such festivals as Corpus Christi and All Souls, showing in what direction the thoughts of the majority in the House of Clergy are turned. This fact is certainly causing High Churchmen to pause and think. Thus the Bishop of Pretoria,

<sup>1</sup> See Church of England Handbooks, No. 7: *Hearing Mass*.

writing in the *Church Times* in November last, and protesting against the suggestion of the introduction of the Festival of the Assumption, expresses his "growing concern at the drift of Anglo-Catholicism within the borders of the Church of England," which he definitely stated to be "towards Rome." "To subordinate," said the Bishop, "our Anglican *lex credendi* to the Roman *lex orandi* is to betray our trust and to sell the pass." The awful extravagances of Mariolatry in the Roman Communion surely ought to have imposed a greater restraint on the House of Clergy.

The duty of those who stand for the Church of England as at once Catholic and Reformed, is to pray that God's overruling guidance and Providence may save our Bishops from failing in their duty to the truth of Jesus Christ and endow them with a right judgment. And, moreover, to pray for themselves, that with courage, wisdom, charity, and insistence they take their share, however small it may be, in opening the eyes of the nation to the dangers that beset the Church of England, and through her the whole religious life of England.

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*Man and God*, by Louisa C. Poore (Elliot Stock, 4s. 6d. net), has reached a second edition. It contains a statement of the beliefs of the writer and how they were attained.

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*The Roman Church and Heresy*, by C. Poyntz Stewart, M.A. (C. J. Thynne and Jarvis, 2s. 6d. net), gives an account of the persecution of heretics, with special reference to the influence of the Vatican. The history contains translations of many passages from rare books and documents in French, Italian, and Latin. The Rev. Walter Limbrick writes a Foreword in which he deals with the present-day teaching of the Roman Church on persecution. A number of pictures of medals and of frescoes in the Vatican illustrate the connection of the papacy, and its interest in the persecution of the Huguenots.

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The S.P.C.K. publishes *A Confirmation Book* for the use of catechists and godparents, by the Rev. Ambrose J. Wilson, D.D., Vicar of St. Mary's, Oldham (1s. 6d. net). It consists of Sixteen Instructions following the lines of the Catechism. It is full of sound advice, and in the main loyal in its teaching to our Church's standards, though not altogether with the Evangelical emphasis.